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June 4 Around the World: California

June 9, 2009 in Uncategorized by [The China Beat](#) | [No comments](#)

We wrote to the peripatetic Pico Iyer, a Friend of the Blog, to see how June 4th was marked wherever he happened to be this year on the anniversary date. He sent us the following ruminations, in which he alludes to the mid-1980s when he first went to Beijing and first saw Lhasa, at a time when each, in ways [he's described elsewhere](#), was a very different place than it is now:

On the Fourth of June—the great annual feast-day at my old English school, the very opposite of its associations for modern Chinese—I was, as I so often am, at my regular Benedictine monastery on the coast of California. The bells tolled for vigils before the light had come up and wisps of fog ran up the eucalyptus-shaded hillside. Then there was silence and more silence until the next tolling of the bells.

Steller's jays landed on my wooden fence. Rabbits scurried off into the undergrowth. The sun rose over a hill to the south, making the ocean below sparkle and recasting us all in a golden light. Thoughts of Beijing in 1985 and Lhasa in the same year came back. Everything changes and turns and goes round and nothing much seems to move at all.

The monastery and the daybreak singing of the white-hooded monks seemed, in certain regards, the perfect way to think and ask questions about modern China's irresistible rise.

Tags: [1989](#), [6/4](#), [Tiananmen](#)